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Detailed Report

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This report describes the organization and activities of Unternehmen (Operation) Zonnelein, NKVD intelligence unit formed in 1942 to train and employ PW Caucasians and Asiatics from the Soviet republics of central Asia as agents against the Soviet Government. Such agents were used to obtain essential elements of information about Russia's war industries, to spread anti-Bolshevik propaganda, to carry out sabotage missions, and to apprehend Russian agents. Units composed of these agents were also used in military operations on the Eastern Front.

The report also contains information about the organization and operation of Russian intelligence groups which were active in the areas bordering the Sea of Azov.

The particular attention of US counterintelligence agencies is called to Section 6 of this report.

The source of the information is Heinz (Hans) WINTER, former head of Hauptkommmando Sud (Chief Command South), one of the major field units of Unternehmen Zonnelein.

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BIOGRAPHY OF SOURCE

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Born in ST. PETERSBURG, Russia, of German parents. Later attended school in ST. PETERSBURG.

1904-1910

Attended college; received law degree. Became an editor of the St. Peterburger Zeitung; cousin, Paul S. von HEDDEGEN, editor in chief at the time.

1914-1923

Arrested as German subject, deported to OLOETS; escaped after Bolshevik revolution; went to ST. PETERSBURG; later became a member of German Central Committee for Repatriation of German PWs and Civil Internees; later appointed chief of a subsection at BERLIN. Returned to BERLIN and wrote articles against Communism; made chief of press department of the German Workers' League.

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1923-1929 Joined Muell, a clandestine intelligence office of the German IIS, then under Col von BRAUN, and served as consultant on Eastern problems.

1930-1932 Joined NSDAP; served in Prop. Center of SS Gruppe Ost supplying intelligence about the East to higher German headquarters.

1933-1938 Transferred to Gestapo; sent to Gestapo school for Krim Korn (police officials); assigned, on graduation, as chief of Amt III-D, RSHA (counterintelligence matters related to the USSR, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and the Far East). Made trips through Germany and Austria to Internato police services of those countries.

1938 Appointed Director of Security Police.

1939 Appointed director of special courses for counterintelligence work at the School for Security Police and Security Service Officers.

1940-1943 Worked at Main Regional Office, Westro, VIENNA. Later ordered to ERLIN to take part in Unternehmen Zappelini.

1943 Appointed commandant of Camp Sonderlager 7 at BASSAL-SEITZ. Later became 1st (Intelligence) officer of Sonderkommando Sub-section of Unternehmen Zappelini, and subsequently, chief of Hauptkommando Sud.

1944 Transferred to Amt VI-2, FSSA, to take charge of work on documents captured in Russia. Worked in same capacity at KARLASHOF in southeast of Austria.

May 1945 Arrested in Bavaria, while visiting family, taken to STADTSTEIN, and later interrogated by American officers.

REPORT

1. General Assignment Given to Unternehmen Zappelini by the RSHA

Unternehmen (Operation) Zappelini, hereinafter referred to as "UZ," is the name given to the organization and activities of an FSSA intelligence group assigned during the war to train and employ Russian PPs to obtain economic and political information about Russia. This UZ group was a unit of Amt VI* of the FSSA, and transmitted its information to the highest echelon in ERLIN through Referat VI C 3** of Amt VI. According to FSSA, the work carried out by the group was considered the most important intelligence operation on the Eastern Front.

The essential elements of information to be obtained by the UZ group concerned the status of the food supply within the USSR, possible increase in agricultural production by state farms in the USSR, potentials of the Soviet coal and petroleum industry, significant anti-Soviet movements within the USSR, and the best means of using anti-Soviet propaganda within the USSR.

*Department VI of the Reich's central intelligence and police security service. This department controlled the Central National intelligence service. In 1944, several of the department's units were disbanded, with training and using agents and special troops to carry out espionage, sabotage and sabotage in foreign countries.

**Referat VI C 3, a section of Group VI C of Amt VI, RSHA, compiled and evaluated information about Russia, Poland, and the Baltic States. Group VI C of Amt VI handled all matters pertaining to the German and Japanese spheres of influence.

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2. Chain of Command, Unternehmen ZWIEBEL

a. Central Administrations BERLIN, 1942

Amtsleiter, Amt VI, RSHA, BERLIN

Walter SCHLECHTER

Chief of Central Administration
Chief of Referat VI C 2, Amt VI

SS O/Stabsoffizier (Lt Col) GÜNTHER;
later, SS O/Stabsoffizier KEMMLAUER

Intelligence Officer

II/Stab (Capt) TIGHE

Radio Communications Officer
(In BERLIN, the UZ made use of
the radio facilities of Amt VI)

SS Sturmführer (Major) GIESSEN

b. Field Administrative Units, 1942

Hauptkommando Nord (Chief Command North) Chief: SS Sturmbannführer KRAUS

Staff

Oil Troop Unit (700 men)

Military Unit of Hauptkommando
Nord

Hauptkommando Sud (Chief Command South)
Staff

Chief: REINHOLD; later, FETTER;
later, HÜBNER

1 Troop Unit of Grucciones (200 men)

1 Troop Unit of Asiatics (350 men)

Training Camp BERDYANSK

c. Auxiliary or Cooperating Units

Industrial Interrogation Center, HELSINKI
Central Camp for UZ Troops, KLAUZENBERG, Silesia

Chief: Sturmbannführer
ZURZICK

Turkmen Training Camp (location not known)

Chief: E/Stab KIRCHNER

The Wannsee Institute of Referat VI C 2, Amt VI

Chief: Adjutant ZILLI

Stab WALLI*, a unit under control of Admiral
CANARIS

* The UZ military unit assigned to Oberkommando Nord, which was in operation in the area of PGKOV and later in the area of RIGA, was called the Gil Troop, after its leader, a Russian. Agents in this group were Russians who had expressed themselves as anti-Soviet, but had not been thoroughly investigated by the Germans. The Germans suspected that some had volunteered merely to obtain the large sum of money which the Germans usually gave agents when they were about to commit. Later, a number turned out to be double agents or pro-Soviet. These murdered their German leaders and gave their names. A number of former Russian officers and NKVD men offered to murder important Russian communists. Their offers were taken seriously, large sums of money being given them to accomplish their missions. However, nothing ever really came of these missions.

** Stab WALLI and UZ exchanged information about identification papers and documents, such as passes for foreigners, military badges, and membership cards for Communists and Komsomol members. However, the two units duplicated each other's work. There was no real integration of their work and no specific provision was ever made to have the units inform each other of the latest developments with respect to intelligence obtained about Russia.

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3. Screening and Selection by Unternehrren Zemulin of Asiatic and Caucasian Agents

At the time UZ became an organization, Poles in PWs to be used as agent informants were taken from a number of PW camps and sent to the Central UZ prisoners in KREUZERG, Silsila. The future personnel of Hauptverwende, one of the field units, was drawn from PWs who came from the territories of Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, Tadzhikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Dergie. Russian PWs who were knowledgeable concerning essential elements of information but who were unsuitable for use as agents were sent to the UZ interrogation camp (Sonderlagen T) at BRESLAU-OSWITZ. These latter were usually technicians, engineers, scientists, etc.

Of the many PWs originally selected for UZ, very few were suitable for agent work, principally because the Soviet authorities had already weeded out the anti-Communistic intelligentsia, leaving only anti-Communists who were illiterate.

4. Training by Unternehrren Zemulin of Asiatic and Caucasian Agents

a. Training by Central Administration of UZ, BERLIN

The basic training of Caucasians and Asians as agents of UZ was often carried out without regard to a real system or set of principles. Some of the camp commanders treated their men in a very military manner, while other camp commanders paid little attention to military discipline and laid more stress on personal hygiene. In general, PW trainees from the Soviet republics of Central Asia were given military drill, biological lectures, and were sometimes permitted to listen to news broadcasts in German from the Berlin radio stations. Many of the trainees could not understand a word of German, and it was the exception rather than the rule for PW trainees to hear their own language used in a news broadcast from BERLIN.

FEMUR states that German attempts to make National Socialists out of the Turkmen were ridiculous. However, he did everything in his power to arouse in them a feeling of nationalism by teaching them to be proud of their past history and by inciting them against the USSR, pointing out to them that although the present Soviet Government had relieved them of some of the burdens imposed upon them by the Tsarist Government, the Soviet Government would never grant complete independence to the republics of Central Asia. It was also pointed out to the Turkmen that the Turkmen intelligentsia had been liquidated or exiled whenever was discovered that they advocated complete independence for the Turkmen Republic, and that the languages spoken in the republics of Central Asia had been Russified to the extent of substituting Cyrillic letters for the Latin letters.

A training feature regarded by FEMUR as ~~very~~ effective was the sending to BERLIN of groups of twenty to thirty PWs from the republics of Central Asia to show them the glories of the city and to impress upon them that Allied bombing was ineffectual. These men were taken on guided tours and shown the mosque in BERLIN. Although many of them were indifferent to the religious significance of the mosque, all of them were impressed.

* According to information contained in Appendix B, FR 31, CODIC (WEA) PAOR, dated 21 January 1946, "the dept of Gruppe VI C which from the end of 1942 onwards became known as Unternehrren Zemulin gradually evolved from the Russian organisation of the Gruppe, and dealt exclusively with interrogation and selection of Russian PW volunteers, with a view to employing them as agents in the front-line operations."

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At the conclusion of such trips, convivial parties were given by the leading personalities of the Central Administration of UZ for the American prisoners of the nationalities represented by the visiting group of PWs. In one of these meetings, there were present a number of members of the Free National Independence Committee, including VELI KAZHISHEV, the leader of the Committee and a close collaborator of FETTER, SMID, of the German Eastern Army. Speeches were made in the German and Turkish languages. However, only the PWs from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan were able to understand German or Russian.

The same general procedure was followed for other groups, including Georgians, who were brought to UZ. The Georgians, particularly, enjoyed a favor of the RSHA, as many had previously moved from PAKIS to BERLIN, hoping that by cooperating with the Germans they might eventually win independence for Georgia. Among the leading Georgians living in UZ and helping the Germans were MEDIA and SCHETELI, the last-named having at one time been ambassador to BERLIN of the Independent Republic of Georgia.

As an aid to training PWs from the republics of Central Asia and other areas of Russia, publications and articles containing propaganda, which were issued by the various committees for independent republics of Central Asia, were distributed to the various civil and advance units of the UZ. Some of these publications proved of inestimable value, especially those which assessed conditions within the various territories of the USSR from a nationalist point of view. Among such papers were two Turkmen journals, one Georgian, one Armenian, one Azerbaijani, and one for the small minorities in the northern Caucasus.

The journals showed that the USSR had taken every precaution to avoid possible awakening of nationalist feeling in any of the territories under its control. In particular, the journals stressed that the USSR had fostered the various languages of the minorities to make sure that there would be no common language among them. In connection with this, the German Government first used the literary language common to the entire area in Central Asia. Later, it chose the language particular to any area where minorities were settled. This second procedure was taken on the assumption that because of the efforts of the Soviet Government, many of the minorities had drifted away from use of the common literary language. However, the German Government printed all its pamphlets in Latin letters, not in Cyrillic.

Although the younger generation of PWs from the republics of Central Asia were indifferent to attempts to create a Pan-Islam movement - in fact most of those from Kazakhstan belonged to the Dostogilniki (League of Athletes in Russia) - all of them seemed anxious to fight against the Soviet Government. FETTER notes that of the 350 Asians under his command, only 26 observed any religious teachings of Islam. However, among all the Mohammedans there was evidence of a common religious bond.

In connection with its efforts to arouse these PWs by making use of their religious feelings, US stressed that the German Army was reopening the mosques in those areas of the USSR which it had conquered. UZ pointed out that similar action by the Red Army was taken mainly for the propaganda value in foreign countries, particularly in Allied countries. It also pointed out that the Soviet Government had recognized in religion a vital force which could be made use of in the fight against Germany.

FETTER is of the belief that had the end of the war not come so quickly, Germany would have won for itself a number of Moslem leaders to act as agents for fomenting unrest among the Mohammedan masses within the USSR. This was of course, and Germany did not have enough time to educate and train such agents.

b. Training of Agent Agents at Sonderkaserne TEGELAU-OSWITZ

While commandant at Sonderkaserne 2, HESSEN-OSWITZ, FETTER trained PWs from the republics of Central Asia to use small arms, dynamite, and W/T apparatus. The PWs were given courses in the German language and in the ancient na-

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modern history of their countries. They were indoctrinated with anti-Communist ideas, and it was made clear to them that development of their own countries could be possible only after Bolshevikism had been wiped out.

FEW DP permitted his PW trainees two leaves a week from camp, feeling that this would strengthen their trust in German leaders. At the same time, he realized that such leaves jeopardized the security of UZ operations. In some instances, such leaves resulted in a higher venereal disease rate among the trainees.

5. Organization, Duties, and Activities of Hauptkommando Sud

a. Organization

Hauptkommando Sud was organized in March 1943 under command of SS Stabsoffizier ROEHLER and was established in PERMANSK shortly thereafter. In October 1943, the organization was moved to VOSKENSK, in December 1943 to GELESSA, and later, shortly before the Russians recaptured GELESSA, to KALINOV, Poland.

The chief component units of Hauptkommando Sud in 1943 and 1944 were as follows: a main command unit and suboffice oriented units. The components of the main command unit were an administrative and housing section, an intelligence section, a radio unit, a documents section, medical units, two military units, and groups of agents. The main command unit retained the title Hauptkommando Sud. The suboffice units were located in the rear of the immediate front, at KALINOV, STALINO, GLAVYANSKAYA, TAGANROG, SHIPLIS, and KERCH. An advanced outpost or sub-office was stationed at KRYVINSKAYA, on the Kuma Peninsula. All the suboffices were organized like the main unit, only less completely and on a smaller scale.

b. Duties and Activities

Respective components of Hauptkommando Sud undertook the following duties and activities:

(1) Administrative and Economic Section

The administrative and economic section fed and housed the staff of Oberkommando Sud and the military units attached to it, and clothed and armed various UZ units which were committed by Oberkommando Sud.

(2) Operations Section

The Operations section planned the commitment of Georgians and other Caucasian groups.

Operatives for the Caucasian area generally were sent to the vicinity of TIFLIS and KUTAISI, Georgia. Some agents were also flown to northern Caucasus where known anti-Russian and anti-Bolshevik peoples or groups lived. Attempts were made to contact Mohammedan groups in the Caucasus, and for this purpose prisoners from the regions of Karachai, Dagestan, Azerbaijan, and Chechens were available as agents. The members of the Mohammedan groups were poor sources of information, but excellent at making propaganda and in fomenting trouble or organizing partisan groups.

(3) Intelligence Section

The intelligence section was in charge of counterintelligence work, made propaganda, carried out the ideological training of agents to be committed, planned and organized the commitment of abilities from the republics of Middle Asia, and maintained liaison with German Army Groups South and A until ordered by Central Administration, UZ, to desist from doing this last-mentioned service. The section also maintained liaison with naval intelligence units stationed at MARPOL and GELESSA.

Information obtained from field agents was condensed into reports which were sent weekly by plane or courier to Central Administration, UZ, BERLIN.

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The more important information was radioed directly to the SOH in KIEV. General intelligence reports were also sent to the intelligence officers of V Army Group Northern Ukraine and Army Group Southern Ukraine.

Before sending off agents on long-range action, the intelligence section treated them especially well. Small festive parties were organized for the agents, during which they were decorated with the East medal especially struck off for such volunteers. FISCHER usually accompanied his agents by plane from BERDYANSK to TAGANROG, and started with them at 1200 W/G after holding them Kornee. The agents were then flown on to the point from over which they would parachute down.

Each agent group usually consisted of four to five men, one of whom was a W/T operator. They were allowed to choose their own group leaders. In groups assigned important missions, there were two W/T operators. Each group had specific instructions, and some of the groups took along quantities of propaganda material, generally thousands of pamphlets or magazines which had been published in BERDYANSK by the National Committee of United Turkmen.

The intelligence section sent several groups of agents to the area of the estuary of the Ural River. Other groups were flown to the region near the mouth of the Ima River, about thirty miles east of ODESSA. All these groups were told to reach the railway district of the Etap. Some of the groups were ordered to cut the pipeline which ran north from the Caspian Sea to the northern districts. For security reasons, these last were dropped by plane at a considerable distance from the districts in which they were to operate. All of the groups maintained contact by wireless, some for many months. Some groups reported propaganda successes. Other groups established relations with persons of influence in SAKHAROV and TASHKENT, but the智能 groups were not able to damage the pipeline during the period in which FISCHER was intelligence officer. In general, the information which these groups sent by wireless to FISCHER was of no great value.

FISCHER states that the security of his missions was often jeopardized because plane transportation was looking for agents who were waiting to leave on a mission. The agents became nervous and distrustful. In one particular case, a group of Georgian agents were forced to wait for several weeks before a plane became available to transport them to their place of commitment. During this time, the men were often drunk, and FISCHER believes that Soviet agents successfully approached them and obtained information about the undertaking. He also learned that one Georgian, becoming impatient with the delay, had proposed to a comrade that the two betray the group to the Soviets after the place of commitment had been reached.

To aid him in security work, FISCHER bribed some fishermen of BERDYANSK with liquor and tobacco to act as informants. The fishermen, Ukrainian and supposedly anti-Soviet, reported that at YISK, on the eastern side of the Sea of Azov, they had been approached by Russian intelligence men whom they recognized as former members of the Waffen SS and had been ordered to tell exactly what German and Romanian units were in BERDYANSK. As soon as FISCHER obtained corroboration of the presence of a Russian intelligence unit at YISK, he was convinced that a major Russian move would be made against BERDYANSK. After checking his information and consulting with those of the nearest counterintelligence unit of the German Army, FISCHER then informed the commandant at BERDYANSK to be particularly watchful for increasing counterintelligence and saboteur activity on the part of the Russians.

FISCHER's maintenance of liaison with army intelligence bore a great deal of fruit until the Central Administration of Unternehmens Zeppelin ordered him to stop. For instance, the secret orders given to a Soviet armored corps fell into the hands of an outpost unit of FISCHER. The information therein was immediately passed on to the intelligence officers of German Army Groups A and South. In return, officers of these units informed Hauptkommmando South of resistance movements in Dagestan and north in Terekhov, which could be utilized by Hauptkommmando Sud.

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Hauptkommando Sued also cooperated with naval intelligence units at MARIUPOL and ODESSA. The work of the naval intelligence unit at ODESSA paralleled that of Hauptkommando Sued, although on a smaller scale recruiting committee agents by plane. However, the naval unit funneled more agents through the lines.

(4) Radio Unit

The radio unit trained V/T transmitters for use with agent groups and equipped those groups with V/T sets. The unit also maintained communications of groups in the field and with the Central Administration of Unternehmen Zergolin at BERLIN.

(5) Documents Section

The documents section forged Soviet identification papers for use by agents of Oberkommando Sued. Some of the documents in Amt VI, RSHA, were placed at the disposal of Unternehmen Zergolin, for forging Russian identification papers. Former Soviet officers who professed hatred of the Soviet Government were also employed in this work. Counterfeited documents, often in fairly deranged state, were successfully counterfeited; large numbers of Finskin stamps were made, and paper of the same quality and color as that used by the Russians was obtained. As a rule, it was easy to match the paper used in genuine Russian identification papers as the scarcity of paper in Russia had led to use by the Russians of almost any kind of paper. However, some Russian identification papers and documents were printed on excellent paper, in which case the Reich Intelligence Service was able to supply similar paper for use by the documents section.

Once, Hauptkommando Sued captured an entire set of secret documents belonging to a Russian division, containing instructions for verifying and checking identification papers and showing the precise places where entries were to be made on soldiers' passes. Some of the agents of Hauptkommando Sued were able to report that identification papers found on the basis of the information contained in the captured documents had been checked repeatedly by Soviet specialists and had not been detected.

Whenever information about changes in Soviet systems of identification was obtained, Hauptkommando Sued immediately reported this to Amt VI, RSHA.

(6) Military Units

Under Oberkommando Sued there were two military units made up of men considered unsuitable for use as agents. One group numbering about 350 Asiatics was used for a time to guard the immediate vicinity of the KEDYAK camp. The other unit and the other military unit, consisting of about 200 Georgians, was used in the lines. The groups were particularly helpful in combating Soviet saboteur agents. In combat, the Asiatics were excellent, unlike the Georgians.

In general, REHLER was always against keeping these two units on an integral part of Unternehmen Zergolin, and he finally succeeded in convincing his superior headquarters that his point of view was right.

6. Russian Intelligence and Sabotage Activities

After Hauptkommando Sued undertook operations on the Western Front, it noted that Russian intelligence and sabotage activities kept increasing. Russian agents were parachuted almost nightly into the Dardynak region. Within one period of ten days, seven groups of five men each were dropped behind the German lines. However, with the help of the Ukrainian police or UZ military units, twenty-nine of these agents were captured by Hauptkommando Sued.

Hauptkommando Sued learned that Russian counterintelligence headquarters at YEKISK had been assigned to cover an area equal to that occupied by German army or army group at most. This was much smaller than the area covered by Hauptkommando Sued. REHLER interrogated the captured agents and found that

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a. The mission given to the agents was primarily sabotage, including destruction of railroad track, explosives, undergrounds, etc. Obtaining information was of secondary importance, and this information was limited to German troop movements, arrival of reinforcements from Germany, and the appearance of anti-German partisan groups. (At this time, the population in the Southern Ukraine was anti-Bolshevik, a condition which did not prevail later.)

b. The Russians operated on the principle that the larger the numbers committed, the more likely the chances of success. Of the persons committed by the Russians, many were forced to accept the assignment. Some had been jailed on suspicion of being pro-German or unfaithful to the Fatherland and had been released only on their promise to redeem themselves by volunteering for such a mission. Others had made fascist remarks. Others had come from concentration camps in Russia. Others were natives of the Ukraine, had been forced to volunteer, but had determined not to act against the Germans.

c. As a rule, except for the leader of any group of Russian agents, none of the members knew any details about the mission nor had received any training, equipment, or money. Few carried weapons. Most had no identification papers whatsoever, although it was later discovered that the leader of the group had been given local identification papers to hand over to each member of his group after the group had reached its place of commitment. Almost all the agents were dressed in civilian clothing of poor quality, in contrast to the quality of clothing given by the Germans to their agents before committing them to an area. (Later, the Germans provided their agents with the kind of clothing worn by the residents of the district or area to which the agents were to be sent.)

FENTER also learned that Russian agents were kept incommunicado after being assigned a mission and before being sent off on the mission. For food, Russian agents were usually given some bread and bacon, nothing more. They were expected to live off the land.

d. The leader of any group was usually a Communist who knew all details connected with the mission, had been well trained, and had been given information concerning his line of withdrawal, including passwords necessary to get back through the front lines. As a rule, the leader was the only one who could operate the group's W/T set. The leader was also the only one who carried a compass, a watch, and money, the last usually being a small sum, in contrast to the amounts which the Germans gave to their agents. (FENTER states that one group of Asiatics sent out by Unternehmern Zonpolin carried over a million rubles to cover any contingency. The Germans also always took into account black market conditions in any area where their agents were to operate.)

FENTER learned that the Russian agents sent messages not in code but using pre-arranged phrases. For instance, "bright sunshine" indicated that the group had landed safely and that all was well.

7. Evaluation of UZ Operations Against the Russians

FENTER states that Unternehmern Zonpolin fell far short of its hoped for goal for the following reasons:

a. The higher officials of UZ had no real knowledge of Russia and its problems. For instance, many of the officials refused to understand that the people might not revolt against the Soviet Government and failed to take this into account when planning operations.

b. UZ was never able to maintain good security. For instance, its Asiatic agents were often held up from going on their missions because planes were lacking. These agents were permitted leave while waiting for transportation on a mission. Some became drunk and divulged to Russian agents, it is believed by FENTER, the nature of their mission. Others contracted venereal diseases, forcing the Germans to re-arrange plans and personnel commitments.

c. The Germans assigned to lead the crowds of Asiatics and other Russian nationals were not fit to do so. Some of the chief German agents treated the Asiatics as inferiors and thus lowered the morale of the group.

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- d. Too much time was spent in discussing and making fentastic plans to destroy all Russian war industries in the Urals.
- e. German planes could not fly the vast distances often required for success of a mission, nor could the planes reach targets in the interior of Russia.
- f. The value of anti-Russian propaganda carried on by having the agents distribute pamphlets, etc. was in direct ratio to German military success.
- g. The units of UZ and German NIS units failed to cooperate. For instance the military governor at KEDYANSK was very uncooperative. In another case, Hauptkommmando Sudet was ordered to cease exchange of information with certain Army units.

For the Commanding Officer:

AFFOID L. GILMER
DAGC Desk V